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Two Valleys 'Saved'

Fishing Creek: Landfill Out

By ROGER SEIP
Staff Writer

The state Environmental Hearing Board denied a permit to the operators of a proposed landfill in Fishing Creek Valley on Tuesday, reversing a 1980 decision by the state Department of Environmental Resources.

"If there is one thing that is crystal clear in this case, it is that the landfill in question is not needed or wanted in Middle

Paxton Twp.," Paul E. Waters, the hearing board chairman, wrote in the board's 28-page opinion, also signed by Dennis J. Harnish, a member of the board.

The basis of the decision, Waters wrote, was that the state constitution requires "there be some constitutional benefit to outweigh the environmental price theoretically paid by all of us."

Citing another environmen-

tal case involving a quarry, Waters said that Commonwealth Court had concluded that "the record demonstrates that benefits of the quarry are substantial and outweigh the environmental harm which would result." Regarding the Fishing Creek landfill, Waters wrote: "We can not say the same."

The hearing board clearly indicates that it regards the en-

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Stony Creek: PP&L Quits

By CARMEN BRUTTO
Staff Writer

Pennsylvania Power and Light Co. on Tuesday announced it has abandoned plans to build a pumped storage hydroelectric plant in the Stony Creek Valley.

Following through on an agreement made in December 1979, PP&L will return to the state Game Commission the entire 1,702.19 acres of land it had acquired from the commission

for the proposed plant. The agreement called for return of the land if the hydroelectric project were abandoned.

Clifford L. Jones, secretary of the state Department of Environmental Resources, said PP&L's decision "truly reflects the underlying aim of the utility to protect the environment, whatever the costs."

Official notification was made in a letter from PP&L President Robert K. Campbell

to Glenn Bowers, Game Commission executive director.

Campbell said that in addition to the land connected with the terminated project, the Game Commission also was retaining ownership of about 5,400 acres of land in the Clark Creek and Fishing Creek valleys that PP&L had given the commission previously in exchange for the proposed hydroelectric

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PP&L Gives Up On Stony Creek

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plant site. That was another condition of the agreement.

PP&L's decision was prompted by enactment of a state law in March 1980 designating Stony Creek a wild and scenic river. The company deferred its abandonment decision until all financial, legal and regulatory aspects could be studied thoroughly, a spokesman said.

Originally, PP&L intended to develop the project alone, but several years after the land was acquired, PP&L entered into an agreement with Metropolitan Edison Co. for the joint development, ownership and operation of the proposed project with all costs and benefits to be shared on a 50-50 basis.

The utilities spent about \$5 million for land acquisition, subsurface investigations, ecological and environmental studies and preliminary engineering work. PP&L is now working out the details for conveying the land back to the Game Commission with final settlement expected in mid-August.

Stony Creek was selected by PP&L as the most promising site for a pumped storage hydroelectric generating station after a review of about 336 other sites under a study that began in 1962.

The utility planned to build a 2,000-foot long dam, about 130 feet high, that would have created a reservoir covering 600 acres of the

valley floor and 4.5 miles of Stony Creek.

In 1969, PP&L acquired the Stony Creek land from the Game Commission in exchange for more than three times the acreage in the Clark Creek and Fishing Creek valleys. State law prohibits the Game Commission from selling land it owns, but permits exchange of one unit of land for three units of similar value.

At the time of the acquisition, the utility said, it did not anticipate any objection to the project on environmental grounds. There was no provision in state law for the designation of a river as a wild river "and there was no reason to believe that it would not be possible to build the generating station," PP&L said.

However, the project was vigorously opposed by the Stony Creek Valley Coalition, a group wanting to preserve the area in its natural state.

PP&L regards pumped storage as an efficient way of generating electricity because of its value as a load-management tool, a spokesman said. A pumped hydro station consists of two reservoirs, one at the top of a mountain, the other at the bottom. A tunnel connects the two bodies of water and a power house containing a pumping generating unit is located in the tunnel.

When demand for electricity is low, water is pumped from the lower reservoir to the top. Conversely, when electric consumption is high, water is released.